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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DUBLIN 000533

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [TBIO](#) [KFLU](#) [KPAO](#) [SENV](#) [EI](#)
SUBJECT: IRELAND WORKING ON PREPAREDNESS PLAN FOR PANDEMIC
INFLUENZA

REF: A. STATE 69310

[1](#)B. 05 DUBLIN 1434

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[1](#)1. On May 8, Post delivered ref A demarche to Teresa Cody, Department of Health and Children Principal Officer for Public Health, who is Post's primary GOI contact on avian influenza (AI). Cody noted that she would reconnect with Post regarding any GOI questions on ref A materials. She also forwarded the brief note copied in para 2 regarding Ireland's preparedness plan for pandemic influenza. In sum, the note says that Ireland is continuing to expand, in the context of AI, a pandemic flu plan that was originally drafted in 2002. The Influenza Pandemic Expert Group referenced in the note is a panel of health professionals and academics who provide the GOI scientific advice on AI, while the Standing Inter-Departmental Committee includes representatives of Government agencies with front-line responsibilities in the event of a pandemic outbreak. HSE refers to the Health Service Executive, the body that oversees Ireland's health care system. The note indicates that GOI efforts are currently focused on stockpiling vaccines and anti-viral drugs. (Ref B presents a more detailed outline of Ireland's AI efforts.)

[1](#)2. Begin note:

Pandemic Preparedness

All evidence to date indicates that the avian influenza (H5N1) virus does not spread easily from birds to infect humans. The WHO level of pandemic alert remains unchanged at phase 3: a virus new to humans is causing infections, but does not spread easily from one person to another.

Pandemic preparedness planning is a high priority for the Department of Health and Children and for the Health Service Executive. The overall aims of influenza pandemic planning are to reduce mortality and morbidity, and to minimize the resulting disruption to society in so far as possible.

This work has been ongoing for some time:

-- A Model Plan for Influenza Pandemic Preparedness was finalized in 2002.

-- A generic public health emergency plan for the health system was prepared in 2004. This included disease-specific Operational Response Plans in relation to SARS, pandemic influenza and smallpox.

Pandemic planning is a dynamic process and work is ongoing on a number of fronts:

-- The Influenza Pandemic Expert Group is updating expert guidance.

-- The Pandemic Influenza Operational Response Plan is being updated in line with the most up to date expert advice. This work is being progressed through working/implementation groups established by the HSE to address actions within a number of functional areas.

-- The Department has established a Standing Inter-Departmental Committee to consider issues which go beyond the health aspects of an influenza pandemic.

-- Arrangements have been made to procure a stockpile of H5N1 vaccine for key health care workers and other essential workers. The Department is also actively pursuing an advanced purchase order for a pandemic strain vaccine.

-- We are stockpiling 1 million treatment packs of the antiviral drug, Tamiflu. 600,000 packs have already been delivered. The remaining 400,000 packs will be delivered this year. Arrangements have also been made to purchase a supply of the active pharmaceutical ingredient (oseltamivir phosphate powder) to treat children between 1 to 5 years of age.

-- Arrangements are also being finalized for the stockpiling of additional supplies of the other suitable antiviral drug, Relenza.

-- Non-pharmaceutical public health interventions aimed at reducing the spread of infection also have an important role. The Expert Group is updating guidance in this area with reference to the latest recommendations from the World Health Organization.

-- Further information is on [www.dohc.ie/issues/avian flu](http://www.dohc.ie/issues/avian_flu)

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End note.
Kenny